

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-16 (canceled)

17. (currently amended) An automated meter reading system comprising: having a plurality of utility meters for measuring and recording metered data, a plurality of nodes, each node communicating with a number of designated meters to read the meter data, a plurality of gateways, each gateway communicating with a number of the nodes to receive the meter data, a data network interfaced to communicate with the plurality of gateways, and a host server interfaced with the data network to receive the meter data read from the gateways, said host server maintaining a topology database that holds: comprising: first electronic data representative of meter assignments to at least one node; second electronic data electronically keyed to said first electronic data and representative of node assignments to at least one gateway; third electronic data electronically keyed to the second electronic data for grouping together a plurality of nodes to define groups of noninterfering nodes based at least in part on the node assignments; and fourth electronic data electronically keyed to the second electronic data for grouping together a plurality of gateways to define sets of noninterfering gateways.

18. (previously presented). The system of claim 17, wherein said host server stores information related to the topology of gateways, nodes, meters, and their respective interconnections and/or interfaces.

19. (previously presented) The system of claim 18, wherein said topology database is initially populated based on a geographic location of every meter, node, and gateway in the system.

20. (previously presented) The system of claim 18, wherein cells are defined, each of said cells defining a plurality of meters that each communicate with a particular node.

21. (previously presented) The system of claim 20, wherein said host server determines which nodes communicate with which gateways in accordance with said cells.

22. (currently amended) The system of claim 17, wherein ~~noninterfering~~ noninterfering meters, nodes and gateways are defined in said topology database by like identifiers, and wherein said host server addresses noninterfering ones of said meters, nodes and gateways by sending a command containing said like identifiers.